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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1252

[redacted] SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 5172

E.O. 12065 XDS-1 6126109 (CASTRO, RAUL H) OR-M
TAGS AR, SHUM
SUBJECT [redacted] AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS WITH GENERAL VIOLA

REF: A BUENOS AIRES 4701; B STATE 163602

1. [redacted] ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: GENERAL DENIAL ENTERED BY GENERAL VIOLA ON JACOBO TIMERMAN'S REPORTED IMMINENT RELEASE. HE LABELED RECENT NEWSPAPER STORIES AS TOTALLY INACCURATE. VIOLA AGAIN PROMISED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WOULD BE REDUCED SUBSTNATIALLY. HE ALSO PREDICTED GREAT MOVEMENT IN RIGHT OF OOPTION CASES. VIOLA EXPRESSED GREAT CONFIDENCE IAHRC WOULD FIND IMPRESSIVE IMPROVEMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD, BUT OFFERED NO HOPE FOR "DESAPARECIDOS." HE EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN ABOUT NICARAGUA STRESSING GOA'S WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH USG IN ITS OBJECTIVES. VIOLA FELT AN OAS MILITARY PEACE FORCE PROBABLY NEEDED BUT NOT ACCEPTABLE TO LA COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY

3. APPRECIATION FOR MFM SUPPORT: GENERAL ROBERTO VIOLA, JUNTA PRESIDENT AND ARMY COMMANDER, REQUESTED I MEET WITH HIM ON MONDAY, JUNE 25 AT 1715 HOURS AT HIS OFFICE. DUE TO MY BEING OUT OF COUNTRY, I HAD NOT SEEN GENERAL
[redacted]
[redacted]

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S20000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
(X) Release () Excise () Deny
Exemption(s): _____
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full
() Classify as __ () Extend as __ () Downgrade to __
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason ____

VIOLA SINCE ABOUT MIDDLE OF APRIL. HE MET ME WITH THE TRADITIONAL "ABRAZO" AND INQUIRED ABOUT HOW THINGS STOOD

IN WASHINGTON, DC. HE EXUDED FRIENDLINESS BUT YET SHOWED CONCERN ABOUT RECENT WAVE OF NEGATIVE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON ARGENTINA APPEARING IN CONUS.

4. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: VIOLA WAS SPECIFIC IN HIS DISDAIN FOR NEW YORK TIMES SERIES WRITTEN BY MR OAKS AND ENSUING EDITORIAL. HE TERMED WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL CONTEMPTIBLE AND IRRESPONSIBLE. HE HOPED DEPARTMENT WOULDN'T ACCEPT VERACITY OF ARTICLES "IN TOTO", RECOGNIZING SOME MERIT TO PORTIONS OF REPORTING. I MADE IT CLEAR TO VIOLA AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS ARE INDEPENDENT AND ATTRIBUTION SHOULD NOT BE TO EMBASSY OR DEPARTMENT. HE ACKNOWLEDGED TOTAL INDEPENDENCE OF NEWS MEDIA AND STATED NO LINKAGE OR ATTRIBUTION SHOULD BE MADE TO USG. VIOLA'S CONCERN WAS THAT DUE TO IMPORTANCE OF NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST, DEPARTMENT MIGHT CAVE IN ASSUME AN ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS POSTURE TOWARDS GOA. I ALLAYED VIOLA'S FEARS BY TELLING HIM DEPARTMENT AND USG TOOK AN OBJECTIVE AND JUDICIOUS VIEW ON ARGENTINA. I REMINDED VIOLA THE STRAIN IN RELATIONS IS DUE TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, BUT USG WELCOMED IMPROVEMENTS. I EMPHASIZED "BALL NOW IN THEIR COURT"ND IMPROVED RELATIONS WERE CONTIGENT ON MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS. HE ACCEPTED THIS AS A FACT.

5. IAHRC VISIT: VIOLA REMINDED ME IAHRC WOULD BE VISITING ARGENTINA STARTING SEPTEMBER 6. HE STATED THIS DATE WAS CHOSEN BY IAHRC AND NOT BY GOA, WHO HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATING ITS VISIT SINCE LATE MAY. VIOLA STATED PRISON CONDITIONS HAVE IMPROVED TREMENDOUSLY AND RELEASES WILL OCCUR IN LARGE NUMBERS. HE SAID ALL [redacted]

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OF GOA IS BEING GEARED FOR IAHRC VISIT RESULTING IN VIRTUALLY NO DISAPPEARANCES, NO TORTURE AND NO IRREGULAR ARRESTS. I REMINDED HIM OF SIX DISAPPEARED STUDENTS AS OF A FEW WEEKS AGO. HE AGREED THIS WAS A BLACK MARK IN THEIR RECORD, BUT DESPITE ALL INVESTIGATORY EFFORTS NO INFORMATION EXISTED ON THIS BIZARRE OPERATION.

5. DESAPARECIDOS: VIOLA STATED IN 1978 THERE WAS AN AVERAGE OF ABOUT FIFTY "DESAPARECIDOS". AT THIS POINT HE LOOKED AT HE WITH DIABOLICAL GRIN -- FROM EAR TO EAR -- JOINING HIS GREY MUSTACHE WITH HIS SIDEBURSNS, AS IF THOUGH HE HAD ONE ON ME AND SAID: "I TAKE YOUR FIGURES

OF FIFTY PER MONTH LAST YEAR. LOOK AT THE RECORD THIS YEAR. IT'S ONLY SEVENTEEN DISAPPEARED IN SIX MONTHS." I INTERRUPTED HIM STATING OUR FIGURES INDICATED TWENTY-TWO DISAPPEARANCES. HE SAID "EVEN SO, YOU MUST ADMIT THERE IS A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT." I ACKNOWLEGED THE IMPROVEMENT BUT TOLD HIM HE WOULD NOT GET MUCH SOLACE FROM USG UNTIL THE FIGURE WAS ZERO. HIS REPLY WAS THAT THEY WERE GETTING THERE AND WAS CONFIDENT BY TIME IAHRC ARRIVED GOA WOULD REACH THE ZERO STATUS. VIOLA MADE IT CLEAR TO ME THE "DESPARECIDOS" WOULD NOT RETURN. I INQUIRED ABOUT HIS STATEMENT. HE REPEATED IN HIS OPINION THE DISAPPEARED WOULD NOT BE SURFACING. AGAIN, I ASKED ON WHAT HE BASED HIS OPINION. VIOLA'S REPLY WAS THAT GOA LACKED INFORMATION ON THE DISAPPEARED AND IN VIEW OF THE EXTENDED PERIODS OF DISAPPEARANCE HE DOUBTED ANY OF THESE PEOPLE WERE ALIVE. HE SAID THERE MIGHT BE A FEW CASES SURFACING - THOSE UNACCOUNTED FOR IN PRISON DUE TO ERROR -- BUT THESE WERE RARE EXCEPTIONS. VIOLA STATED GOA WOULD PROBABLY HAVE SOME STATEMENT ON DISAPPEARED WHEN IAHRC ARRIVED. HE SAID IT WOULD BE A STATEMENT WITHOUT SPECIFICS, BUT HOPEFULLY WOULD BE PALATABLE TO SOCIETY.

7. RIGHT OF OPTION: I TOLD VIOLA THE RIGHT OF OPTION
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PROGRAM HAD BEEN A FIASCO UP TO NOW. HE WAS REMINDED GOA -- THROUGH ITS APPROPRIATE AGENCIES -- HAD NOT GIVEN EMBASSY REASONABLE COOPERATION, BUT TO CONTRARY HAD RAISED ALL KINDS OF BARRIERS. AMAZINGLY ENOUGH, HE AGREED WITH MY STATEMENT, BUT RETORTED RIGHT OF OPTION CASES WOULD BE MOVING FAST FROM NOW ON. HE SAID THESE CASES WERE HIGH ON THE AGENDA.

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8. TIMERMAN CASE: RECENTLY "CONVICCION", NAVY ORIENTED NEWSPAPER, AND THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD, ENGLISH-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER, FRONT-PAGED TIMERMAN'S IMMINENT RELEASE.I TOLD VIOLA USG HOPED THESE PREDICTIONS WERE ACCURATE. HE DENIED ANY TRUTH TO THE REPORTS. HE SAID TIMERMAN WAS NO CLOSER NOW THAN HE WAS SIX MONTHS AGO TO BEING RELEASED. VIOLA AGAIN EXCULPATED HIMSELF BY STATING IF IT WERE LEFT UP TO HIM TIMERMAN WOULD HAVE BEEN RELEASED A LONG TIME AGO. IN A JESTING FASHION, I SUGGESTED TO VIOLA THAT AS ARMY COMMANDER AND PRESIDENT OF THE JUNTA HE WAS IN A UNIQUE POSITION OF AUTHORITY TO LEAD THE WAY. HE SMILED AND REPLIED HIS OBSTACLES WERE WELL KNOWN TO ME. IT WAS THEN I INQUIRED IF IT WOULD BE PROPER TO DISCUSS THE TIMERMAN CASE WITH GENERAL SUAREZ MASON, CHIEF OF STAFF AND TIMERMAN'S NEMESIS. I EXPECTED A MINOR EXPLOSION ON THIS SUGGESTION FOR AS LONG AS I HAVE DEALT WITH VIOLA HE HAS NEVER ADMITTED SUAREZ MASON TO BE ONE OF HIS PROBLEMS. MUCH TO THE CONTRARY, VIOLA LOWERED HIS VOICE AND TOLD ME HE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED I DISCUSS THE TIMERMAN CASE WITH SUAREZ MASON. I TOLD VIOLA THAT RECENTLY SUAREZ MASON HAD INVITED HIMSELF TO MY RESIDENCE FOR AN "ASADO" - "GAUCHO BARBECUE". IT WAS SUGGESTED BY VIOLA THAT DURING THIS BARBECUE I DISCUSS THE TIMERMAN CASE. VIOLA INDICATED EVEN THOUGH TIMERMAN'S RELEASE IS NOT IMMINENT, THERE [redacted]

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IS STILL SOME HOPE.

9. SARAGOVI CASE: I REMINDED VIOLA OF RENEWED AND CONTINUED CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST ON THE HORACIO SARAGOVI CASE. HE APPEARED NOT TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE CASE. I TOLD HIM THE CASE WAS DIRECTLY IN HIS LAP AS IT WAS A MILITARY TRIBUNAL CASE. THE CASE WAS UP FOR REVIEW BY HIM. HE TOOK NOTES AND PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

10. SOCCER GAME: LAST NIGHT ARGENTINA, WORLD CHAMPIONS,

PLAYED AGAINST A TEAM, COMPRISED OF OUTSTANDING PLAYERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. ARGENTINA LOST 2 TO 1 WITH A FULL STADIUM OF OVER 75,000 PEOPLE. I ATTENDED THE GAME. I WAS PREPARED TO SIT WITH THE REST OF THE "COMMON HERD" BUT AS I WALKED INTO THE STADIUM AN UNKNOWN GENTLEMAN SPOTTED ME AND TOLD ME I WAS TO SIT IN THE "PALCO DE HONOR" (VIP BOX). I TOLD THIS PERSON MY TICKETS WERE NOT THE VIP AND I WAS PERFECTLY CONTENT TO SIT AT MY DESIGNATED PLACE. THIS GENTELMAN WAS QUITE STERN IN TELLING ME I BELONGED IN THE PRESIDENT'S BOX. I WAS THE ONLY AMBASSADOR IN THAT SPECIFIC AREA. THERE WERE SEVERAL AMBASSADORS IN ATTENDANCE, BUT I WAS THEONLY ONE PERMITTED TO SIT NEAR THE PRESIDENT AND THE JUNTA. I THOUGHT THIS WAS AN UNUSUAL TWIST CONSIDERING SOMEWHAT STRAINED RELATIONS DUE TO NEGATIVE NEWSPAPER STORIES FROM USA.

11. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT THE MEETING VIOLA KEP TELLING ME HIS PURPOSE IN WANTING TO SEE ME WAS TO DISCUSS NICARAGUA. WE DID DISCUSS NICARAGUA, BUT I FELT IT WAS ONLY AN EXCUSE TO DISCUSS MULTIPLE OTHER MATTERS. HE SAID GOA WAS FULLY IN AGREEMENT WITH USG ON NICARAGUAN POLICY, BUT FEARED SENDING A MILITARY PEACE FORCE WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO LA COUNTRIES. HIS REASONING [redacted]

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WAS MOST OF LA COUNTRIES HAVE INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND EACH COUNTRY FEARED A PRECEDENT WOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN SENDING MILITARY UNITS TO SETTLE BASIC DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. VIOLA SAID THE NICARAGUAN PROBLEM WAS NOW BEYOND DIALOGUE AND NECESSITATED CURTAILING THE INFILTRATION OF MATERIAL AND TROOPS THROUGH PANAMA AND COSTA RICA. VIOLA RATIONALIZED THIS COULD ONLY BE DONE WITH A MILITARY PEACE FORCE, BUT THE ARGENTINE PUBLIC WOULD NEVER BUY IT. IT APPEARED TO ME HE WAS GROPING OR HOPING FOR ME TO GIVE HIM SOME JUSTIFICATION FOR SENDING A PEACE FORCE TO NICARAGUA, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE ARGENTINA.

12. ADMIRAL MASSERA: STRANGELY ENOUGH AS I WAS LEAVING 'IOLA' OFFICE I RAN INTO ADMIRAL MASSERA, WHO WAS COMING TO REPORT TO VIOLA ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO MEXICO. MASSERA WAS COMPLETELY SURPRISED TO SEE ME AS I WAS TO SEE HIM. THE ONLY ONE NOT SURPRISED WAS VIOLA AND I FELT HE HAD PLANNED IT THAT MASSERA AND I WOULD MEET. IT APPEARED VIOLA WANTED MASSERA TO KNOW I HAD BEEN WITH HIM. IT'S JUST THE CASE OF THE OLD "ARGENTINE INTRIGUE" JUST

AS SUAREZ MASON WANTED VIOLA TO KNOW THAT I WAS HAVING AN "ASADO" WITH HIM.
CASTRO

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